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PRESS RELEASE

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Department on Aging Announces 2021 Senior Illinoisan Hall of Fame Inductees

Awards Recognize Contributions of Older Adults to Their Communities

SPRINGFIELD, III. – Four Illinois residents have been inducted into the Senior Illinoisan Hall of Fame, the Illinois Department on Aging (IDoA) announced Tuesday. IDoA presents the Senior Illinoisan Hall of Fame awards annually in the categories of community service, education, performance and/or graphic arts, and the labor force.

“Older adults are some of our most valued community members, and it’s an honor to recognize those who have dedicated their time and talents to helping others,” said Paula Basta, Director of IDoA. “Congratulations to each of our 2021 Hall of Fame inductees. Our state is a better place because of their service and accomplishments.”

Created by the General Assembly in 1994, the Senior Illinoisan Hall of Fame award commemorates the achievements and contributions of Illinois residents age 65 and older who have made a positive impact in their community. Inductees are selected through a statewide nomination and judging process and honored at local award ceremonies.

The 2021 Senior Illinoisan Hall of Fame inductees are:

- Cynthia Worsley, 78, of Sandwich in the community service category: A proponent of the aging population for nearly 40 years, Worsley is the executive director of Fox Valley Community Services, a nonprofit organization serving older adults in DeKalb, Kane, Kendall and LaSalle counties. When COVID shut down their in-person programming last spring, Worsley and her staff worked tirelessly and creatively to keep older adults engaged and combat social isolation. She, along with her staff, made hundreds of wellness calls, delivered baskets of cheer, implemented a new series of parking lot activities, and distributed over 1,500 units of PPE to older adults and community members. Worsley was also a driving force behind the opening of a new adult day service center in DeKalb to help older adults in the area continue living vibrant, independent lives and avoid early nursing home placement.
- Jerry Stefl, 73, of LaGrange in the education category: An art and design educator at both the K-12 and higher education levels, Stefl has dedicated his career to cultivating high quality educators and programs for students and teachers. For 33 years, he divided his teaching time between Carl Sandburg High School in Orland Park and the School of the Art Institute Chicago, where he led future educators in fieldwork experiences, as well as taught Continuing Studies courses for students from age 8-80.

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The Illinois Department on Aging does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with appropriate State and Federal statutes. If you feel you have been discriminated against, call the Senior HelpLine at 1-800-252-8966; 1-888-206-1327 (TTY)

Working with the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, Stefl helped infuse arts learning with the STEM curriculum, a project in which he is still engaged. Stefl also serves in many volunteer roles, including as an advisor to the College Board's AP program, and he was an early member and leader of the Illinois Art Education Association, which has served tens of thousands of teachers and millions of students.

- The late Richard Hopper of Riverton in the performance and/or graphic arts category: Hopper started his career as a public servant at the age of 29, eventually becoming Chief of Police for the Village of Riverton. He took great pride in serving his community, responding to calls during the day and at night would answer any emergency calls on the "red phone" at his residence and respond alongside his deputies. In 1978, Hopper transferred to the Sangamon County Sheriff's Office, where he swore to serve and protect for the next 23 years. Hopper was a man with strong ethics, a deep respect for and knowledge of the law, and a love of music. He played in many bands from age 14 to 72, and started a band called Johnnie and the Cyclones, which produced a record.
- Harriet Hawkins, 73, of Oak Park in the labor force category: With a nursing career spanning 50 years, Hawkins is recognized as an expert in the field of pediatric nursing and a compassionate advocate for the smallest patients. Since 1982, she has worked at Lurie Children's Hospital, where she has held various roles, including Resuscitation Coordinator, member of the Neonatal/Pediatric Transport Team and Clinical Educator. Aside from her professional activities, Hawkins donates her time to provide medical care to individuals experiencing homelessness at the Housing Forward Medical Clinic.

"This year's Hall of Fame honorees prove that there is truly no age limit when it comes to pursuing our passions and making a difference," said Governor JB Pritzker. "These awards are not only a testament to the inductees' present contributions but their legacies of achievement. I applaud these seniors for their time, dedication, and service and I wish them the best in all of their future pursuits."

For more information about the Senior Illinoisans Hall of Fame, visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/HallofFame/Pages/default.aspx>. For information about IDoA's programs and services for older adults and persons with disabilities, contact the Senior HelpLine toll-free at 1-800-252-8966, Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

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